

Safety Culture:



The Rocky Mountain District's Report for "*Creating a Culture of Compliance*".

We should acknowledge the fine work that all of you have done over the years in protecting miner's health and safety. Many of you have worked closely with the Mine and Safety and Health Administration and we welcome the opportunity to further our relationship with all of you.

This work is far from being completed and we know that all of you want to continue to send every miner home at the end of every shift.

PAST AND PRESENT

In 1910, when the government started collecting statistics, over 3,500 miners lost their lives - and that's really just an estimate as the Indian territories and other regions were not included in the official totals. Of course, as time progressed, and so too technology, the number of fatalities dropped. But even in 1977, when the Mine Safety and Health Act was passed by Congress creating this agency, over 270 miners died on the job. Last year, there were far fewer -- 57 fatalities in 2003. The Assistant Secretary Dave Lauriski said "this is only in comparison to the other years fatalities, for we must always remember the human cost and face of these tragedies".

The Mine and Safety and Health Administration is creating a new "culture of compliance" to help bring down the injury and fatality rates in our nation's mining industry. A culture of compliance that is relying on new tools, creative partnerships, and innovative initiatives and programs to help make sure that every miner comes home healthy and safe after their shift . . .

In today's economy, the number of shifts is definitely increasing for America's miners. There has been an upsurge in the mining industry, especially coal mining. In fact, their stock has soared more than fifty percent over the past year.

Coal is definitely back on the front burner as the demand for affordable electricity grows and natural gas prices become more expensive. Coal today costs less than \$1 per million BTUs (British Thermal Units) compared to over \$6 per million for natural gas. As a result, more coal companies are reopening closed mines and are looking to add more work shifts - and many of the states, counties and townships are reaping the benefits.

For instance, the International Steel Group is reopening a mine near Ebensburg, PA. and creating over a thousand jobs - and this is being repeated throughout other states across the country.

This expansion is also going on for a number of metal and non-metal mine operations, especially in the west. In fact, long time farmers and ranchers in Montana are turning to rock as a cash crop because of the popularity for certain rock surfaces for decorative home use and construction. (Farmers are no longer cursing every last rock they had to pick out of their fields as they're now getting from \$100 to \$250 per ton for them!)

Yet, while the mining industry fuels the home boom and powers the nation's electrical grid, the number of miners is decreasing . Out of a workforce of 146 million, only 340,000 men and women work in the entire American mining industry. Wal-Mart has that many employees in just seven or eight states.

BUILDING A RECORD OF SUCCESS

Dave Lauriski recently stated in a speech that "as the Assistant Secretary of Labor for MSHA, it is very gratifying to be in charge of securing the health and safety of all our nation's hard working miners. With a budget of nearly \$269 million and over 2,300 MSHA employees, we are required by law to inspect every underground mine four times a year, and every surface mine twice a year.

In total, that's over 14,000 mines a year that MSHA must inspect. (In comparison, OSHA has a universe of 6.5 million workplaces to inspect, and would need 167 years to do it!) And one MSHA mine inspection can take weeks, even months to accomplish.

When he took over as head of the agency, he set goals that many believed were unrealistic. One goal was to reduce fatalities by 15 percent annually. We have made very good progress in meeting this aggressive goal.

Last year the U.S. mining industry achieved its best safety record since 1910. As mentioned earlier, 57 miners died in mining-related incidents last year versus 85 in 2000 - a decrease of 34 percent. The decline in injury rates has followed downward as well. These are not just numbers, but lives saved and tragedies averted.

This decline in the fatality and injury rates are the result of a number of factors. The most important is the new emphasis MSHA places on communications and outreach - both within MSHA and with our stakeholders -- and the willingness of those we regulate to work with us in a collaborative way.

If you are to make safety and health the values that determine all your choices, you must start internally with your employees. At MSHA we are making our goals and methods clear to every member of our team. They are the performance measures by which every person is evaluated, and promotions and salary determined.

Given that President George W. Bush and U.S. Secretary of labor Elaine L. Chao both have MBA's, you would expect nothing less than the ability to demonstrate tangible, measurable results.

Communicating internally also requires that you get out and talk to your employees in the field. MSHA's top managers are constantly on the move. Dave Lauriski has personally visited every one of our 17 district offices - at least twice to talk with our employees. Whenever he is on the road, he is sure to visit mines as often as possible. Over the past few weeks he has been to an aggregates mine in Arizona, underground coal mines in western and eastern Kentucky, and an underground lead mine in southern Missouri .

OUTREACH TO STAKEHOLDERS

Of course, communicating with our stakeholders is a major priority, and to keep in touch we have developed a number of special initiatives. Here are examples that will give you an idea of our outreach strategy.

Last year we started the National Coal Mine Safety Awareness Day. The purpose of this event is to raise the awareness level among coal miners and operators concerning hazard recognition and prevention. We sent over 600 enforcement, training and technical support personnel to 1,500 active coal mines, over a two week period, to speak directly with miners and mine operators.

For Metal and Nonmetal mines we initiated special Spring Thaw Workshops which come just before the start of the high-production season. They are designed to increase awareness of mine safety hazards at a particularly critical time of the year.

To make sure even our smallest stakeholders are not ignored, we created a Small Mines Office whose sole purpose is to help small mine operators comply with safety and health regulations or just help them develop a safety program. Last year we took health and safety education on the road and visited more than 1,600 of these small mines.

Besides on-site visits, we also utilize cyberspace to reach out to our stakeholders through National Web casts. With hundreds of stakeholders online, we analyze fatalities - both causes and prevention - and discuss best practices. Then there is our Website - which gives stakeholders the ability to download materials, submit forms, or just ask questions.

And to be inclusive when it comes to safety and health training and development, portions of our website and a number of our publications are available in the Spanish language. We also have bilingual employees, and offer mine-site sessions in Spanish. *Regardless of immigration status, we will not leave any miner behind.*

Strengthening our relations with our stakeholders, goes beyond making on-site visits or web-casts. It also requires closer coordination, which is why we are also developing a number of special alliance agreements.

Trade associations, labor unions, and professional societies are recognizing the advantage of working directly with MSHA rather than independently to reach health and safety goals. They are demonstrating their commitment by signing alliance agreements which go further than just putting pen to paper. For example:

The CEO's of the member companies of the *National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association* have formally pledged to adopt MSHA's safety and health performance goals as their own. This is a first for the industry.

The *National Safety Council*, not traditionally associated with the mining industry, has mobilized their diverse membership to protect children from the hazards associated with mine sites through the "Stay Out-Stay Alive (SOSA)" partnership. Assistant Secretary Dave Lauriski was joined by their senior vice president to kickoff our annual SOSA campaign at a New Mexico elementary school.

And the leadership of the *International Union of Operating Engineers* took the bold step earlier this year to join MSHA and undertaking joint emergency response training and exercises in order to bolster our nation's homeland security. This is MSHA's first formal agreement with a labor organization - and we just held our first meeting to set the parameters by which the alliance will function.

TRIANGLE OF SUCCESS

These partnerships, initiatives and outreach programs are a part of MSHA's overall strategy, our Triangle of Success - which involves using a balanced approach to mine safety and health involving technical assistance, education and training, and enforcement - with compliance assistance underpinning all our initiatives and programs.

When it comes to technical assistance, we're working on a number of important projects, including haul road design to help control runaway vehicles, and the use of robots armed with video cameras, gas detectors and thermal imaging devices to explore hazardous underground mine conditions.

We're working with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to test prototypes of a personal dust monitor (or PDM) for use in coal mines. The device will take constant readings of the air and would be able to download to a computer the miner's actual dust exposure levels after the shift ends.

Needless to say, when it comes to education and training, almost everything we do involves some type of educational component. But the crown jewel of MSHA's educational and training programs is the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in West Virginia. The Academy's doors are always open to help mining companies with annual refresher courses, mine rescue training, mine foreman certification and electrical training.

Besides education, training and technical assistance, our strategy to further improve safety and health performance also involves compliance assistance. Today, compliance assistance is an integral part of every component of MSHA activities.

We understand that the vast majority of mine operators want to do the right thing; and we should be willing to assist in that objective. We believe that assisting employers in complying with the law is every bit as important as enforcement.

All of our mine visits are now "inspections with a purpose." Inspectors are there to help identify and determine the root causes of hazards that lead to both violations and incidents.

We want these inspections to be a win/win/win for all the parties involved. And, as we have been doing, we will continue to hold the mining industry to stringent standards while we provide advice and assistance to those who are working to improve safety performance.

This is our charge, our mandate, our objective.

CALL TO ACTION

Overall, our strategy is taking hold and we are making a real difference in the lives of miners. What we are doing is creating a culture of compliance. One that allows for:

Better cooperation between MSHA personnel and mine operators

Closer working relationships with equipment manufacturers and suppliers in the research and development of new technologies

Collaboration with academia and others to find more efficient ways to educate miners

Development of new alliances with traditional and non traditional stakeholders.

In the coming months and years ahead you will find MSHA less tradition bound and bureaucratic and more efficient and accessible. There will be more cooperation, closer working relationships, and better collaboration with our stakeholders.

Quite honestly, we want to become the premier mining safety and health agency in the federal government, second to none.

All safety and health managers have the same goal and purpose. That's why working together and pooling our experience and talents has made such a real difference in the lives of our employees. But much more remains to be done, to achieve the common vision we all share - having miners return home to their loved ones at the end of every working day in a healthy and safe condition ...

In conclusion this is an editorial that was recently written by the editor-in-chief of Coal Age Magazine. He writes . . .

"The new mantra for the coal business is 0 fatalities. We now have the potential to make that a reality in the near future. It's certainly an attainable goal. Wouldn't that be something, more than a billion tons of coal and no one loses their life?"

The same should hold true for metal and non metal mines. Wouldn't that be something, billions of tons of sand and gravel, potash, lime, alumina and also no loss of life? That's the challenge to the industry and what we should all strive for!